

OLD GODS OF APPALACHIA

Bumper Crop

A Tale for the Season

Old Gods of Appalachia is a horror anthology podcast and therefore may contain material not suitable for all audiences, so listener discretion is advised.

Mavisdale, VA

1975

The first of the pumpkins appeared in Ada Spivey's yard seven days before Halloween. Her shift at the hospital had ended at five, and she'd just pulled into the driveway in her new Volkswagen Rabbit when she spotted it — almost glowing in the waning October sunlight, a ripe, fat pumpkin sitting right in the middle of her yard, which was strange because she had not planted any pumpkin vines. Ada was a gardener, not some farmer scraping by on handouts from the church and what she could coax out of the dirt like her mama. She had *applied herself* in school, as Principal Vance at Mavisdale High used to say, and earned a scholarship to what was at the time the newly opened college over in Glamorgan, where she'd earned her nursing degree. The work was hard and the hours were long, and in point of fact Ada didn't really like it much, but the money was good and she never had to depend on anybody for anything. When Ada had returned to Mavisdale to look after Mama in her final years, she'd bought a tall, narrow Victorian style house on the edge of town bordering the woods and filled her yard with flowers. She had no interest in planting vegetables — which she could easily purchase in the produce aisle at the Piggly Wiggly — particularly gaudy orange gourds with spindly, tangling vines that would choke out her begonias. It must have somehow spread from Gary Jesse's place up the road. He grew pumpkins, sold 'em on the side of the road right by his mailbox. She'd have to speak to him about that; he should be more careful.

But that could wait. Right now the important thing was to dig it up — the pumpkin had to go. Someone might misinterpret it as a festive nod to the upcoming holiday, and bring trick-or-treaters to her door. Ada would not be doling out candy to any little goblins this year. She had to cover second shift for Cindy Akard, who was getting married Saturday and would be honeymooning in Mexico next week. The hospital administration had better not think this was

gonna become a permanent change just 'cause Cindy was married now. That wasn't Ada's problem. She'd paid her dues, had worked the long nights and covered the missed shifts. Management always presumed an unmarried woman could just drop whatever she was doing and pick up the slack whenever they were short-staffed, and Ada had always stepped up without complaint. But she'd earned her spot on the day shift, by God, and if anybody thought she was giving it up, they had another think coming.

Ada heaved a tired sigh — she'd been on her feet since early morning, and she'd really been looking forward to her evening ritual of sitting down at the kitchen table to read the paper over a cup of coffee and a cigarette — one of the two she allowed herself per day — before she cooked dinner. She let herself in the back door, dropped her pocketbook on the counter, and took a moment to open a can of wet food for her big, white-footed Siamese cat, Simon, and pay the required toll in ear scratches. Then she exchanged her uniform for something more appropriate for yard work — a pair of faded old jeans she'd had since college and a Mavisdale Bears t-shirt — fetched a shovel from the gardening shed, and headed back outside to remove the offending gourd. The pumpkin itself was easily dispatched — Ada simply chucked it in the big trash bin by the kitchen door. The vine was another matter. It seemed to wind all through her garden, wrapping delicate tendrils around brightly colored mums and sending creepers all through her prized rose bushes. The sun had set by the time she managed to trace the sprawling thing back to what she thought was its source, several yards into the woods behind the house, and it was nearly full dark by the time she'd rooted the thing out to her satisfaction.

Breathing heavy from the effort, Ada leaned on her shovel and pushed her glasses back up into their proper place, wiping the sweat from her face with her fingers and readjusting the frames. She was tired and hungry, and the last thing she felt like doing at this point was cooking. She thought she might treat herself tonight, just kick up her feet and order a pizza. Hell, maybe even cuddle up on the couch with a glass of wine and her cat, and stay up to watch the ABC Friday Night Movie. She didn't work again 'til Monday. She could live a little.

Ada returned her shovel to the garden shed and headed back into the kitchen to look up the number for Pizza Hut. While she paged through the phonebook, she made note of Gary Jesse's number as well. She'd ring him tomorrow about the errant pumpkin in her yard.

Next morning, Ada allowed herself a little lie-in, snuggling down under the quilts her Mamaw had made until Simon indignantly stomped up onto her chest and howled for his breakfast. “Yeah yeah, you’re obviously starving to death,” she chuckled, nudging 15 pounds of fur and entitlement off her bed so she could sit up and shove her feet into a pair of fuzzy slippers. She’d felt warm enough last night, but it was chilly this morning. She pulled a cozy fleece robe off the hook on the back of her closet door, wrapped it around herself, and padded carefully downstairs, Simon twining around her ankles the whole way down, clearly intent on helping her reach the kitchen faster by way of knocking her down them on her backside.

Ada opened a can of his favorite chicken liver paté, scooped it out into a ceramic bowl with little cat faces painted on the sides, and deposited it in its usual spot on the floor. She noticed a few soggy, stray morsels of the dry kibble she left out for him while she was at work in his water dish, and carried it to the sink to rinse and refill. As she stood at the sink, scrubbing the bowl with a dish rag, she glanced out the window into the back yard and noticed three plump, round, orange shapes. Ada blinked, and wiped the sleep from the corners of her eyes. That couldn’t be right — there’d only been one pumpkin last night, and she’d dug up the vine. She’d left her glasses upstairs on the night stand — surely she was mistaken.

Ada returned the clean bowl of water to the floor for Simon, loaded up the coffee maker with fresh grounds and water and set it to percolate, then padded back upstairs to find her glasses. She brushed her teeth and her hair, pulled on a pair of jeans, a t-shirt and a long wool cardigan, shoved her feet into her Keds sneakers, and went back downstairs to figure out what she’d actually seen through the kitchen window.

What she’d seen were pumpkins. As she walked through the back yard with a fresh cup of coffee in her hand, she counted not three but nine fat, round pumpkins in the golden October sunshine.

This was just ridiculous. Ada stomped back into the house and reached for the phonebook, where she’d scribbled down Gary Jesse’s number on the cover. She dialed the Jesses’ house, and after a few rings, Gary himself answered the phone.

“Mr. Jesse, this is Ada Spivey. From down the road?”

“Oh! Uh, yes’m, what can I do for you?”

“We have a problem.”

“We do? What problem is that?”

“It’s your pumpkins. They’re infiltrating my yard.”

“They’re what now?” Gary sputtered, not quite covering an incredulous chuckle.

“This is no laughing matter, Mr. Jesse,” Ada snapped. “They’re everywhere! Just come over here and take a look for yourself. And then you can tell me what you plan to do about it.”

“All right, all right — I’m happy to come take a look for you, Miz Spivey. And please, just call me Gary. I reckon I can be there in the next twenty minutes or so, if that’s all right with you?”

“Thank you. Yes, that’ll be fine. I’ll see you shortly.”

Gary Jesse was as good as his word. Within twenty minutes, he rolled into Ada’s driveway in a dusty blue and white two-tone Ford F-100 pickup. Ada didn’t know Gary well. He was close to her age, maybe a few years younger, and wore the farmer’s fall uniform of work boots and jeans that had seen better days with a brown flannel shirt and a Pabst Blue Ribbon gimme cap. She knew he was divorced and had a couple of kids that he saw on the weekends — although there was no evidence of them today. And of course, she knew he had that pumpkin patch, because he sold the damn things on the side of the road every autumn.

The thought soured Ada’s mood, her lips pressing into a thin line as she stepped out the kitchen door to meet her visitor in the driveway. She did not invite him in, instead closing the door behind her and walking over to the truck to meet him.

Gary politely took off his cap and nodded to her. “Morning, Miz Spivey.”

“It would be,” Ada said bitterly. “If it wasn’t for your pumpkins.”

“I’m not rightly sure I understand, ma’am. Forgive me, but I... don’t seem to recall you buying one of my pumpkins — if you did, I believe you! And if there’s something wrong with it, I’ll be happy to replace it, I just—”

“I didn’t *buy* any pumpkins, Gary Jesse! They’re in my yard! Your damned vines have infested my property. You’ve planted some invasive species, and they’re choking off my flowers!”

“I— no, ma’am, I haven’t,” Gary said, sounding puzzled. I have autumn golds and jack o’lanterns, and some sugar pumpkins and baby pams for later in the season — you know, for pies and such — but it’s the jumbo varieties that can get to be a problem. I don’t plant any of those. They’re too much trouble, and too few people want to buy a 50-pound pumpkin.”

“Well, whatever varietal they are, they’re here. They’ve invaded. Just look!”

Ada walked around Gary’s truck, leading him from the driveway into the back garden where the unwelcome vines sprawled, laden with plump orange fruit. “There was just one last night when I got home from work,” she explained. “I dug that one up — had to go all the way back in the woods behind the house to find the source — but see? This morning there are nine more. This is a serious problem, Mr. Jesse.”

Pushing his ball cap up on his head, Gary knelt to examine one of the pumpkins, his fingers carefully inspecting the smooth, bright orange fruit, and the leaves and vines, which were streaked with veins of green so dark they looked almost black. When he got to his feet, he slipped his hands into the back pockets of his jeans, and rocked back on his heels, gazing out over her back yard, his expression troubled.

“Well?” Ada demanded.

Gary sighed. “Well, ma’am... it’s not that I doubt your story, but... that’s... just not possible.”

“What’s not possible?”

“It takes more than three months for a pumpkin vine to mature, Miz Spivey. I put mine down in June to be sure they’re ready for fall. Pumpkins this size? I’m not sure what kind they are, they sorta look like Big Toms, or Jumpin’ Jacks maybe, but those don’t have these dark veins running through the vines — anyway, this size, you’re looking at four months. If you pulled the vine up last night, it can’t possibly have regrown this fast. Are you sure you didn’t just miss these?”

“I didn’t miss anything! I went all over my garden last night to make sure there weren’t any more vines strangling my flowers! Or... well at least I thought I did,” she acknowledged. “I had just gotten off work, and it was getting dark.”

“The other thing is... they’re not coming from my property, ma’am.”

“Of course they are! Where else could they come from? I certainly didn’t plant them.”

“My farm is down the road from you, true enough,” Gary said with a nod. “But it’s on the other side of the road? You said they came from the woods behind your house. Well, that’s not my land. That’s CVA property back there, Miz Spivey.”

The Cumberland Valley Authority owned all sorts of land in the area around the Hazel County reservoir. Back in the ‘30s, FDR had established the CVA to address flooding problems in the region, as part of a series of public infrastructure projects meant to get folks back to work during the Depression. The men put in charge of this particular project had some interesting ideas about addressing flooding... such as sinking entire towns beneath the waters of huge, man-made reservoirs and hydroelectric power plants. Hazel County’s reservoir held no ghost town in its depths, thankfully — the very thought sent a shiver up Ada’s spine — but these days the CVA was mighty secretive about its projects, and protective of its property. Folks were expected to shut up, pay their light bills in a timely fashion, and mind the “no trespassing” signs. Those who ignored those signs would be escorted off CVA land at gun point or worse, at least according to the local rumor mill.

“What would the CVA want with pumpkins?” Ada mused.

“I don’t know, ma’am, but you’d best be careful how far into them woods you go.” Gary rubbed his chin contemplatively. “You need some help clearing those out, Miz Spivey?” Ada raised an eyebrow, and he quickly held up his hands to forestall her. “I meant what I said. These are not my pumpkins. But I thought I’d offer. It’s the neighborly thing to do.”

Ada sighed. “No, that’s all right. I can take care of it on my own I guess, but I appreciate the offer.”

Gary nodded politely, told her to call anytime if she needed anything, then hopped back in his Ford and backed out of her driveway. Ada glanced at her watch. It was going on ten o’clock. It would take her the better part of the day to clear out the rest of these vines, and she had really hoped to catch a matinee at the Hazel Cinema this weekend. Maybe tomorrow, but she’d best get to work.

Saturday evening, Ada made a big pot of chili for supper, and portioned out the leftovers to take with her to work for dinner the rest of the week. She watched tv for awhile, and tossed a toy mouse for Simon for awhile — he loved to fetch, just like a dog, and it always made her laugh. Then, exhausted from the day’s yard work, she took a glass of sweet tea and a book to bed. At least, she thought, she’d be able to salvage her Sunday.

Sunday morning, Ada was up early to knock out some chores around the house, washing her uniforms for the week ahead, then sweeping and mopping all the floors. She dumped Simon’s litter box and replaced it with fresh litter. Stripped her bed and washed the linens, then carried them out back to hang on the line and dry out in the sun.

It was then she saw them.

More pumpkins. Many more pumpkins. Gary Jesse had told her it wasn’t possible, yet... there they were.

Ada carried the linen basket back into her house — she could throw the sheets in the dryer when her uniforms were done — picked up the phone, and dialed Gary's number.

Ten minutes later, Gary parked his pickup in the driveway behind Ada's little red VW. She was waiting for him on the back steps, and met him at the door as he stepped down from the cab. The two walked around the truck, and Gary stopped, staring.

“That's uh... that's a lotta pumpkins,” he commented. There were nearly thirty this morning, the vines snaking through Ada's roses, her chrysanthemums and the peony bushes that were dying down for the winter, choking flowers and entangling her fledgling crepe myrtles. The pumpkins themselves were as large as ever, fat and round and bright as tangerines.

“I thought you said they can't grow this fast.”

“They can't. I mean they shouldn't be able to. Hell, I've never seen anything like this.”

“So much for the Sunday matinee,” Ada said with a grim chuckle.

Gary sighed. “Look, let me help you with this.”

“I don't—”

“I know you don't want to accept help, Miz Spivey, but this—” Gary waved a hand at the tangled vines infesting her garden “— this is not a one-woman job, ma'am. I'd feel awful about you being stuck with this all on your own. Please. Let me give you a hand.”

Ada gritted her teeth, took a deep breath, and grudgingly nodded her head. She may have been stubborn, but she was no fool. Maybe there was something she'd missed, and Gary was an experienced farmer. Surely he could manage to root out the problem. She fetched her shovel, a spade, and some garden shears from the shed, and the two of them set to freeing her plants from

the strangling grasp of the wild pumpkin vines. They loaded the pumpkins into the bed of Gary's pickup — he said he'd take them to the dump, just to make sure the seeds couldn't take root again next spring. And they attempted, once again, to trace the vines back to their source, following their snaking tendrils back into the woods behind Ada's house.

The further they walked, the darker the green of the vines became, the dark veins Gary had pointed out yesterday growing wider until the whole vine was nearly black. They sprawled deep into the woods, twining around tree roots and choking brambles. Ada and Gary followed the vines as far as they could, a good quarter mile into the murky woods, until their path was barred by a high fence topped with barbed wire. Signs were posted along its length at regular intervals:

CUMBERLAND VALLEY AUTHORITY
NO TRESPASSING
GOVERNMENT PROPERTY

"You were right," Ada acknowledged, frowning. "What now? Is there anything I can do?"

Gary sighed. "Not much. We can chop the vines off here at the edge of the fence. Then I'd recommend you call the CVA in the morning."

So they did what they could, and Ada rose early Monday morning to make that call, though she'd slept poorly and her muscles ached from the hard labor and all she wanted to do was crawl back under the covers with her cat. She took care of Simon first, as she always did, filling his food bowl and freshening his water. Then she made a pot of coffee, drank the first cup standing at the counter by the percolator, and poured herself another. Thus fortified, she reached for the phone, which hung on the wall by the door. Through the kitchen door window, she could see into the back yard.

It was once again filled with pumpkins, in even greater numbers than before.

Instead of phoning the CVA, Ada dialed Gary's number. As soon as he picked up, she blurted out, "They're back."

Gary sighed. “I know. I drove by to check first thing this morning.”

“There are even more than there were yesterday, I—” Ada chuckled humorlessly. “I feel like I’m going crazy.”

“You’re not. We both saw ‘em. I don’t know what’s going on here, but call the power company. They’re coming from those woods that are on CVA land, so it’s their responsibility to solve the problem.”

“I will.”

When she hung up with Gary, Ada placed her call to the CVA, and was of course immediately placed on hold. Wedging the phone between her ear and her shoulder, she sat down at the kitchen table with her back to the door, and sipped her coffee, and waited to speak to someone who might help her. When she’d sat there for about an hour, the line went dead, and she realized she’d been cut off.

Undeterred, Ada got up to refill her coffee cup, and dialed again.

And so it went, all through the afternoon, as she tried and failed to speak with someone at the power company about the pumpkins. Eventually, she had to give up and get ready for work. She would just have to try again tomorrow. By the next day there were even more pumpkins, and her attempts to contact the CVA were met with more of the same. It was late Tuesday afternoon before Ada was finally able to get through to someone, a young woman who seemed unable to grasp the scope of the problem, but who promised her supervisor would return Ada’s call the next day. Ada had gritted her teeth and thanked her, and trudged upstairs to get ready for work.

Wednesday came and went with no call from the CVA, and the pumpkin vines continued to grow. They had reached the driveway now, had wound their way around the pretty wrought iron cafe table and chairs she’d placed beneath the sugar maple at the northeast corner of the house, and deposited one of their orange progeny right on the tabletop. Ada almost thought she could hear them multiplying in the night, rustling through the fallen leaves as they snaked out of the tree line, stretching and coiling their way around everything in their path, fat orange spawn

bursting forth. But she hadn't been sleeping well, and it was most likely just a bad dream, she told herself.

But on Thursday, Ada woke to find a ripe, fleshy pumpkin sitting on her back steps, just outside the kitchen door. Almost as if it was taunting her. Those weird, black-veined vines wrapped around the handrails, delicate tendrils reaching toward her doorknob. They had begun to creep up the back side of the house, grasping for purchase along the edges of her window panes and shutters, twining around her posts and gutters. Ada hauled off and kicked the fat orange gourd as hard as she could, punting it off the top of the stairs and across the driveway, where it rolled to a stop at the edge of the grass.

Gary stopped by that afternoon to check on her. He'd been calling every day, but this was the first time he'd seen it for himself since Monday. Ada invited him inside, and led him to the living room, where at least she wouldn't have to look at the ever-spreading vines.

"Jesus Christ, Ada," he exclaimed. "This is getting out of hand."

"I know."

"Have you had any luck with the CVA?"

"They finally got back to me today." Ada sighed. "Some man called — let me see, I wrote his name down — some man named Ralph Barrow. He said they'd have someone come out tomorrow morning."

"You might want to consider talking to a lawyer," Gary said gently. "At this rate, you could be looking at serious property damage."

"I know. I am thinking about that. We'll see what happens tomorrow. If they don't come, I'll do that."

Gary offered to help cut away the vines that had reached the house, and she accepted. When Ada tried to follow him outside, pulling on her gardening gloves, he waved her off. "Now I know

you've gotta work tonight, girl. You get on in the house and rest. Let me take care of this." And so she did.

By Halloween morning, however, the pumpkin vines had returned. They coiled around the hand rails on the back steps and climbed up her chimney and twined around the gutters and draped across the eaves. Wide, lobed leaves bobbed gently in the breeze outside Ada's windows. Long tendrils had wrapped themselves around the back doorknob, so she had to go out the front door, fetch the garden shears from the shed, and cut the vines away to open the kitchen door. She pulled them off the hand rails and cleared the steps — that was a safety hazard, after all — but that was all she had the energy for. Then she went inside and fed her cat and made coffee and sat at the kitchen table and lit a cigarette and waited for the Cumberland Valley Authority to come and deal with the problem.

But two o'clock came and went with no sign of any CVA men, and Ada had to get ready for work. She pulled on her uniform and her white work shoes with their cushioned soles, and stood nervously by the back door. Simon circled her ankles, and walked his paws up her stocking-clad legs, mrowing for attention. He could sense she was nervous. Ada swept him up in her arms and buried her face in his soft brown fur. She was almost certain now that she really could hear the vines — a quiet, creaking sound outside her windows, as the things stretched, growing ever longer, twining and reaching, searching for a way inside — and she didn't want to leave. She told herself that was crazy — it was just some vines, after all — but that nagging, anxious feeling just wouldn't go away. But it was a quarter to three, and she'd be late if she didn't leave now. So she set the plump Siamese down on the floor, gave him a final scratch behind the ear, and headed out to her car.

Ada's shift at Mavisdale Regional was long and exhausting. It was Halloween after all, and as with every holiday, people got stupid. They cut themselves carving jack o'lanterns, and set fire to their costumes trying to light them. They tripped over their costumes and fell down stairs. They poked people in the eye with plastic swords or wands or what-have-you. And of course, they drank too much at parties and wrecked their cars. Second shift technically ended at eleven, but she got tied up stabilizing a teenager who'd snatched a Reese's cup from his little sister's candy

haul when he knew full well he was allergic to peanuts, and it was nearly midnight by the time she finally clocked out.

Ada had never quite been able to shake the nervous feeling she'd had about leaving that afternoon, and as she turned out of the parking lot and onto the road, that sense swelled into a feeling of dread that seized her lungs and rose into her throat and threatened to choke her. She crossed her fingers, hoping she wouldn't get a ticket, and stepped on the gas. When she reached her house, she swung into the driveway that curved around back. She hadn't yet reached the corner of the house when her headlights lit up a field of bright orange, as if the gravelled lane had been blocked off with road cones. Ada sat in her car for a moment and stared. The pumpkin vines had grown even more while she was away. They'd run rampant over the back side of the house, and now stretched over the roof and embraced the sides. Windows had cracked under the onslaught and the back door was blocked again.

Ada shut off her engine and got out of the car. Outside, she could easily hear that creaking, rustling sound as the vines stretched, ever reaching for more. She fished the front door key out of her purse, and walked around to the front of the house to let herself in. The house was dark — darker than usual, because the pumpkin vines blocked the usual glow from the back porch light — and silent except for the groaning of the old rafters under the unaccustomed weight of the thick pumpkin vines.

“Simon?” she called into the shadows. From somewhere upstairs, she heard a crack and a hiss. Glass shattered, and Ada's heart leapt into her throat. “Simon!”

She raced up the stairs, almost tripping in her haste, but she gripped the banister and hauled herself back to her feet just in time. She heard a low growl as she reached the top of the stairs, and followed the sound of angry cat down the hall to her bedroom. She found Simon crouched in the floor, tail lashing, ready to pounce on the coil of pumpkin vine that had found its way inside by way of the window, which had fractured under the strain. As she watched, the vine... twitched... and Simon slapped at it with a hiss.

“Nope! We'll have none of that, young man!” Ada laughed, half relieved and half terrified, as she scooped the indignant Siamese up off the floor and went to pull his carrier down from the top of

the hall closet. She wrangled the resisting cat into the crate, and lugged him downstairs and out to the car. She quickly ran back inside to pack up his essentials — food, bowls, cat box and litter — grabbed a couple toys for good measure, and tossed everything in the trunk. Simon yowled as she backed out of the driveway and peeled down the street.

She knocked on Gary's door, cat carrier in arms, five minutes later. Ada explained what had happened as quickly as she could — skipping over the part where she and Simon had seen the vine move, because who would believe that? — and asked if he could watch Simon for a bit while she took care of things.

“Ada... you're both welcome to stay as long as you need. If the house isn't safe for your cat, honey it's not safe for you, either. I've got a guest room. It's not much, but it's warm and it's a place to lay your head while you sort all this out.” Ada started to shake her head, but Gary reached out and squeezed her hand. “Please.”

Ada was quiet for a long minute. She hated to rely on other people, but what choice did she have? “All right,” she said finally. “But you're charging me rent.”

Gary chuckled. “Fine. Whatever you say, ma'am.”

Ada got to her feet. “I just need to run by the gas station and grab a few things from the house, and I'll be back.”

Gary sat up that night, waiting and making friends with Ada's big brown and cream cat, but Ada herself did not return. Eventually he fell asleep on the couch, with Simon snuggled up beside him, and woke to the cat making biscuits on his lap and purring loudly for attention. And food, of course. So he took care of the cat, showered and dressed in fresh clothes, and took a ride down the road to Ada's place.

He found no sign of Ada, and little enough of the house. The stately Victorian was a smoking ruin held up by charred pumpkin vines. The smell of roasted pumpkin hung heavy in the air. She

had parked her little Rabbit at the very end of the driveway — and looking in the windows, Gary could see she'd packed a suitcase and set a box filled with family photos and knickknacks and other keepsakes on the back seat. The car was untouched, if dusted with a fine coating of ash. The ground was charred all the way back into the woods behind the house, the yard littered with the blackened remains of pumpkins that had baked and split open and carbonized in the heat of the blaze.

Gary called the Hazel County sheriff's office, and the fire department followed close behind. He was told the fire marshal found no sign of human remains in the rubble, and although search teams swept the woods — leastways, as far as they could get, the CVA not allowing anyone to search on their land since there was no sign the fence had been breached — nobody ever found no sign of Ada Spivey.

The pumpkins, though... the pumpkins recovered just fine. They soon spilled out of the woods again, bursting forth on lush green vines veined with black, plump and smooth-skinned and almost glowing with ruddy orange malice.

Gary Jesse stopped planting pumpkins after that. He sowed corn instead. Planted taters and yams and melons. No squash, though, no gourds of any kind. And when he drove past the place where his friend Ada had once lived, he kept his eyes straight ahead, and tried not to notice the pumpkins, and prayed they didn't notice him.

Well hey there, family, and Happy Halloween, Harvest, or Samhain. Whatever you're celebrating this season. Thank y'all for joining us for this Halloween special. I told y'all on social media that Miss Cam had something both tricky and treaty cooked up for ya in that witchy cauldron of hers, and did I lie? No I didn't. I try not to do that if at all possible. Family, it's also our birthday. We launched on Halloween of 2019, releasing the prologue for Season One. And this year's birthday converges with another big event: we have broken five million downloads, plays, whatever you want to call it — five million times our episodes have been collectively played and that's a huge milestone for us. We thank you very much for your time, and your attention. We see you and we love you, family. If you'd like to make that bond a little more tangible, feel free to

head on over to patreon.com/oldgodsofappalachia and pledge your tithe. For \$10 or more a month, you get access to a ton of exclusive storylines, like Build Mama a Coffin, Door Under the Floor, the upcoming Black Mouthed Dog, and a ton of other great stuff. We're gonna be talking about a lot of that as well, including information about our upcoming role playing game and the release of Season Three. You can learn about all of that by paying attention to this space. The next thing you hear on the Old Gods of Appalachia feed will be us talking about what's coming in the future and when you can expect it.

Old Gods of Appalalchia is a production of DeepNerd Media and is distributed by the Rusty Quill Network. Today's story was written by Cam Collins and performed by Steve Shell. Our intro music is by Mr. Landon Blood, and our outro music is by Lonesome Wyatt and Rachel Brooke. Talk to you soon, family. Talk to you real soon.